

A
VINDICATION
OF
OATHS
AND
SWEARING

In weighty Cases,

AS

Lawful and Useful under the Gospel;

AND

The Quakers Opinion and Practice
against all Oaths and oath-taking, proved to be unscriptural, and without any just Reason; as also against their own Principles.

By JOHN CHENEY.

I have sworn by my self, the word is gone out of my Mouth in Righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every Knee shall bow, every Tongue shall swear, Isa. 45. 23.

London, Printed for R. Butler, next door to the
Lamb and Three Bowls in Barbican, 1677.

A Vindication of Oaths, and Swearing in weighty Cases, as lawful, &c.

THAT it is lawful for Christian people to swear, I shall first make good by positive proof, and then take off the arguments which are brought against it. It might seem necessary and pertinent to define what an Oath is, and first to treat of the nature of it, and the several sorts of oaths: But my purpose being only to write so much as may suffice for the conviction of the Quakers Errours, and the satisfaction and establishment of wavering and doubtful souls in the truth, I shall only premise this as a groundwork to the ensuing proofs, and a kind of clue or guide for the opening and declaring of the truth in this point; that there be in speech and communication by discourse several steps or degrees towards a certainty and confirmation. And this hath been in use universally throughout all ages of the world, and in all places of mankind. The first and lowest step or degree is a bare and simple affirmation and negation, or pronouncement of the matter without more, as to say, The Lord hath sent me, I am a Christian, My name is *John*, I am going to such place, I am not the man you take me to be. This I take to be the same with simple and bare yea and nay, ay and no, or yes and no, and to be the least and lowest measure of speech tending to certify the mind of him we speak to. This is or should be most ordinary and common with all persons. I am sure with all that have learned the right and true way of governing the tongue, and have the most tender and pure consciences, this is most common and ordinary, and where this will suffice, more should not be used.

2. It is more than bare yea and nay to say indeed, or intruth, or I do assure you, or I do not lye to you, you may believe me, I am in good earnest, verily, and verily verily. These in the use and construction of all languages do differ from bare yea and nay, or a naked and simple affirmation and negation. We are not in discourses to others to put in *indeed* and *intruth* at every sentence; and at every speech we

B

make

make to add *verily, verily*. Christ himself used these words but very sparingly, not alwayes, nor frequently. An instance I may cite one for many, out of *Jerem.* 26. 14, 15. *As for me, behold, I am in your hand: doe with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon your selves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you, to speak all these words in your ears.* Here are diverse words added for confirmation, and the setting on of the truth, *know ye for certain, surely, of a truth.* See 1 *Sam.* 8. 9. And so frequently up and down the Scriptures these words of a truth are used by all. 1 *Sam.* 21. 5. *Of a truth women have been kept from us.* Our Saviour says in his preaching, *I tell you of a truth,* *Luk.* 4. 25. To *Luk.* 9. 27. *Luk.* 12. 44. *Luk.* 21. 3. The same you have by *St. Peter,* *Act.* 10. 34. and by all the Saints gathered together speaking in prayer to God, *Act.* 4. 27. see also *Dan.* 2. 47. *Mat.* 14. 33. And not this only, but God himself also frequently using words for confirmation, besides that Christ is God. *Jerem.* 31. 18. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.* *V.* 20. *I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.* 1 *Sam.* 30. 8. *Pursue, for thou shalt surely overtake them; and without fail recover all.* *Gen.* 2. 17. *God sayes to holy and spotless innocent Adam, In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely dye.* *Gen.* 9. 5. *Surely your blood of your lives will I require.* *Judg.* 6. 16. *And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee.* And multitudes more of the same import the Scripture is full of. Now all these wayes of expression are a degree of confirmation, and are more than a simple yea and nay. And without all question such wayes of expression are lawful, the Quakers themselves not denying but practising and assenting to them. And yet we would not account it well done in any man alwayes and in every of his speeches to use such words for the assuring of the truth to him he speaks. It would be great fault so to doe. These are not to be used without cause, though they be far short of an oath, or the highest degree of security and confirmation in speech.

3. Besides these there be also some other formes of speech, which yet are not accounted oaths, though some think that they are, and peradventure they may be. As, I protest, I call Heaven and Earth to witness, God is witness, I speak before God, I call God for a record upon my soul, My conscience bears me witness, God that knoweth all things knowes that I do not lye: And whether that of *Joseph* be one such, By the life of *Pharaoh* ye are spies, which some take to be an oath,

oath, some not. So when we say, As I live, and as the Lord lives, and I make protestation for my self, and This stone shall be witness unto you, lest you deny your God; for he hath heard all this words which the Lord hath spoken to you, Jos. 24. 27. Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth, Deut. 32. 1. Isa. 1. 2. Jerem. 2. 12. I call Heaven and Earth to record against you this day, Deut. 30. 19. Some of these expressions are generally taken to be an oath. It is certain they are more than yea and nay. As Saint Paul, 1 Cor. 15. 31. I protest by your rejoicing in Christ. 2 Cor. 1. 18. Al God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. v. 23. I call God for a record upon my soul. This seems clearly to be an oath. Rom 1. 9. God is my witness &c. that without ceasing I make mention of you alwaies in my prayers. 1 Thes. 2. 10. Ye are witnesses, and God also. 2 Cor. 11. 10. As the truth of Christ is in me. Gal. 1. 20. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. 1 Tim. 5. 21. 2 Tim. 4. 1. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect Angels. Rom. 9. 1. I say the truth in Christ, I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.

4. The last and highest measure of confirmation in speech is an oath, which regularly should not be used where a lesser measure of confirmation will serve. Heb. 6. 16. Men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. An oath then is for confirmation, and certioration. And it is a confirmation by testimony and appeal to God as Judge of all, mostly by speech and use of the tongue: not that I exclude from swearing, such as cannot speak; I may swear by writing, and external signs and indications known and so taken to that intent; but swearing by speech is most common, and is an engaging of the credit and veracity of him that sweareth for the truth of what is sworn. So that an oath hath place but in such things as depend upon testimony, and the speakers credit and honesty, and is not to be used in things purely sciential and probable by demonstration.

There is imprinted in the hearts of all men by nature a notion or belief that there is a God, & the less depraved that natural reason is, the clearer and stronger is this belief; and proportionable to this belief there is in all persons Religion, which is nothing but an act of the heart or practical mind correspondent to the conception & belief that is in the judgment, drawing along with it the affections, tongue & conversation, towards God or a Deity, by acknowledgement, honour, veneration and adoration, and such worship, service and obedience as the mind conceiveth to be accep-

table to the supream and soveraign being. Idolaters, Paynims and false worshippers believe a Deity and worship him, though corruptly and Idolatrously: they conceit it is right pleasing to God, and so doe it, and rest in it. *John 4. 22. Ye worship ye know not what. Act. 17. 23. The Athenians perform'd their devotions, to the unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. 1 Cor. 10. 20. The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to Devils and not to God.*

Now the estimation and reverence of an oath is taken from the esteem and reverence which all the world hath of him that is called God, the supream and infinite Majesty, whom the Heathens had learnt to call *optimus maximus*. For the nature of man will not suffer that there should be no God. And such power hath Religion in all mankind by the ingraven principles of good and evil in our minds by nature, that we account him a monster among men that shall deny the being of God: and next to him, or as ill or worse, do we account him that acknowledging the being of God, doth not adore and reverence and worship him either truly or corruptly. For all people will walk every one in the name of his God, *Matt. 4. 5. He is in some sort a worse Atheist that believing a Deity, doth not at all worship or honour him by Piety or Religion. Hence both the original and reverence of oaths is deduced, all the world believing a God, & accounting Religion to be the highest & most sacred thing in this world, and swearing to be some way or other an act of Religion, not so natural and essential as some parts and pieces of Religion, but yet a part of Religion, and justly conjoined with it and reckoned to it. And this might be evidenced by plenty of arguments from Scripture, reason, and human authority, and the unanimous suffrage of all writers, and all such as have been worshippers of God, whether truly or corruptly. I shall confine my self to argument from Scripture, and the evidence of the thing itself.*

1. It appears from Scripture that swearing is sacred, or a piece or ingredient in Religion, *Deut. 6. 13. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.* The same is repeated with advantage, *Deut. 10. 20. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name. Isa. 19. 18. In that day shall five Cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts. Isa. 45. 23. I have sworn by my self, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear;* compared with *Phil. 2.*

10, 11. and *Rom. 14. 11.* In all these places it is evident, that swearing is accounted an act of Religion, and as it is usual in other cases by a figure of speech to express the whole by a part, so the Scripture taking swearing to be a sacred thing, and a part of Religion, under this name comprehendeth the entire Religion and Service of the true God. And hence, *Zeph. 1. 5.* *The Lord threatens them that worship the host of heaven upon the house tops, and them that worship, and that swear by the Lord, and by Malcham.* And *Isa. 48. 1.* They are blamed which swear by the Name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth. And hitherto tend all those Scriptures which do limit and appropriate swearing to the name of God, *Isa. 65. 16.* *He that sweareth shall swear by the God of truth, as he that blesseth himself in the earth, shall blesse himself in the God of truth.* *Jos. 23. 7, 8.* *Ye shall not come among these nations, nor make mention of the name of their Gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow your selves to them: but cleave unto the Lord your God.* *Jeremi. 12. 16.* *It shall come to passe if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, the Lord liveth (as they taught my people to swear by Baal) then shall they be built in the midst of my people.* Hence it was the practice of Idolaters to swear by the name of their Idols, *Amos 8. 14.*

2. It is apparent by reason, and by evidence from the thing it self. For what is an oath? I swear by God, I call God for a record upon my soul, I believe that God is all-seeing, heart-searching, most true, most good, and Almighty, the rewarder of all truth and uprightness, and the revenger of all falshood, deceit, and cozenage; and if this thing which I say and swear by his name be not true, if I shall not perform the thing which I promise, if I be not in all points true & sincere in this my oath & asseveration before the Lord, then let me have no portion in God, then let the true and righteous God deal with me as a deceiver, and execute revenge upon me according to my desert for falshood in swearing. This is an oath, out of which it is evident that it is a sacred thing, and doth constitute a part of Religion, or most nearly pertaineth to it. For,

1. It doth contain an acknowledgment of Gods sovereignty and of all his Attributes. Every oath is virtually an acknowledgement of the supremacy of God, as also of his omniscieny, omnipresence, omnipotency, holiness, veracity and justice, *Heb. 6. 16.* *For men verily swear by the greater: and therefore when God makes promise, because he can swear by no greater, he swears by himself, &c.*

2. Every oath is virtually a prayer or imprecation, which is an act of worship.

worship and honouring of God by adoration, calling upon his name. And we find *Jonathan*, when he would put the matter out of doubt 30: *David* by oath, he doth solemnly invoke God together with his oath; and joines imprecation with swearing, directing his matter to *David* even when he called upon God, 1 Sam. 20: 12, 13. In swearing we do virtually imprecate Gods vengeance upon soul and body, and all we have and are, if what we swear be not true, which is a most solemn and dreadful thing.

In every oath there is virtually an appeal to God, as to the supremest Judge, and an attestation of God as present to the truth of what we say. By which we decline the judicature of man, and do virtually acknowledge man to be a deficient creature, and no way to compare with God; and inasmuch as all men know and believe God to be most true and true in itself, and if cannot be that he should attest or bear witness to any untruth or falsity; we do therefore vouch him for our witness; as who would say, if God himself were pleased to speak, he would bear me witness that I say truth. You will all trust God; if God should say it, you would believe it; as much as in me lyes I vouch the most true God for testimony to my words. So that in the intent of him that swears, if the thing sworn be not true, God himself should be guilty of lying and perjury, because I do in effect make him my compurgator, and the same for substance as if God himself had protested what I had affirmed. And there being no higher Appeal than to God, hence it is that an Oath for confirmation is to men an end of all strife, *Heb. 6: 16*. Not that *de eventu* it doth always so fall out, that an Oath ends all suit and strife: For we sometimes see the contrary; and some are of such profligate consciences that we will hardly trust them upon their Oaths. But *de instituto & de fine rei*, an Oath in matters Testimonial and pertaining to Witness-bearing is the highest proof and confirmation that can be amongst men, and all are to rest in this decision, referring the further trial of it to the Judicature of God the supreme Judge; saving that where it can be made out that the party hath committed Perjury, enquiry may be made, and being proved and convicted his Oath and testimony is to be made void, and whatsoever dependeth thereon is to be annulled and cancelled. And hence I think I may with some probability averr and affirm, that only in Heaven swearing is totally useless; there is no need of any Oath at all there, because the Saints and Angels be perfectly and adequately perfect with the perfection of a Creature, and they cannot
fin,

fin, nor can they in the least doubt of Gods everlasting joye and their continuance in that blessed estate to all eternaty. They can have no distrust at all, nor do they need any Oath or Asseveration or means of security and confirmation from God to them, or from them to God, or to each other. Gods Word and Oath recorded in the Scriptures, as to the matter of it, remains everlastingly to be fulfilled, and the continuance of the blessed Angels and glorified Saints in glory is founded upon the verity and immutability of Gods promissory word, and so far there is faith in Heaven, and the glorified Spirits live by Faith. But this Faith is their perfection, and it is a Faith without all imperfection; also Eternity is a kind of *NUMMUS CIRCULUM HANC*, it is not measured by time, the everlasting continuance of the blessed Spirits in glory is as a thing always present and existent to them, they are as sure of it as if they saw it, there is no proper succession and measuring of hours and time in Eternity, there is therefore no use at all for an Oath there, because an Oath is for confirmation, whereas they in Heaven are in the fullest fruition of glory, and their fruition is self, is his, and purest confirmation.

But ever since the creation of man upon earth there hath been place for an Oath, or solemn denunciation. For even in Paradise itself, and while man was innocent and unfallen, the Lord was pleased to swear to him, or confirm him his word to him by more than a bare and simple commination. For thus we read, *Gen. 2. 17. Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely dye.* The words in the Original are, *Dying thou shalt dye*, which is an Hebraism or Phrase proper to that Language, and importeth a degree of speech more than bare *yes* and *noy*, or promising and threatening, and therefore is by our Translators rendered *thou shalt surely dye*. And that which induceth me the more to this observation, is the form of Oath which God used to Abraham, set down *Gen. 22. 16, 17.* repeated *Isa. 45. 15*, where God is said to swear by himself, and the very form or manner of the Oath is expressed, *the Lord swears by himself, saying, Blessing I will bless thee*; which seems to be the same manner of speech with *Gen. 2. 17. Dying thou shalt dye*, and so by comparison of places it seems to be if not an Oath yet a solemn denunciation, like that in *Sam. 8. 9.*

It may be you will object and say, That the Lords promising is swearing, and that when the Scripture relateth of God as swearing, it meaneth no more but his bare word, and no Oath; because say some Gods

Gods Word or Promise is all one with his Oath. This I find among the Citations alledged by the Quakers in their Treatise of Oaths, pag. 137, 138.

To which I answer, That this may by no means be admitted without manifest wrong to the Scriptures, and great absurdity in Reason. It is certain that God hath neither mouth nor tongue; when he speaketh, it is by a formed voice and words: He himself is an incomprehensible Essence and Perfection, and words do not agree to him. And therefore when he speaketh, it is by a created voice, and by instruments and means formed thereunto; and as he speaks by mans voice, so also in mans language. And to say that Gods bare word or simple promise in Scripture is his Oath, is against Scripture it self, *Heb. 7. 21.* The Priests under the Law were made without an Oath, but Jesus Christ with an Oath, *by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent.* And the Scripture doth clearly distinguish between Gods promise and his Oath, *Heb. 6. 17, 18. God willing more abundantly to shew unto theirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an Oath. That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lye, we might have a strong consolation.* These two immutable things are Gods promise and his Oath; they are two and not one: the Lord would not content himself to give his Saints a Promise only, but for their more abundant consolation confirmed it with an Oath: all which considered with the context do prove that Gods Oath and his simple Promise are two distinct things. The Scripture aboundeth with Promises and Threatnings of God, but Gods swearing is more rare. For once swearing there are many and multitudes of promises, *By my self have I sworn, saith the Lord, Gen. 22. 16. Heb. 6. 13, 17. Heb. 7. 21. Psal. 10. 4. Isa. 45. 23. Jerem. 49. 13. Jerem. 51. 14. Amos 6. 8. Psal. 89. 35. Amos 4. 2. 1 Sam. 3. 14. Psal. 89. 3. Mic. 7. 20. Isa. 14. 24. Isa. 54. 9. Isa. 62. 8. Jerem. 44. 26. Amos 8. 7. Luk. 1. 73. Acts 2. 30. Psal. 132. 11. Acts 7. 17 Heb. 3. 11, 18. Heb. 4. 3.* In all which places and a great many more expresse mention is made of the Lords oath and swearing. Now to say that all these mean no more but Gods bare and simple word, promise or threatening, is either to say that there is no difference between swearing and bare speaking or affirming, or that Scripture speaketh not consonantly to it self, nor in the common sense and understanding of all men, and beareth us in hand with a falsity when it telleth us so often of Gods swearing. I believe that the Scripture meaneth as it saith, and would have us

all so to believe, and not to impose a meaning upon Scripture both false and absurd. And if any shall ask how can God swear? by the same way that he can speak, and simply affirm and deny, promise or threaten, and both alike. Up and down the Scripture we find God speaking to us after the manner of men, and so we must interpret and understand, using all wayes of expression, most frequently simple promising and threatening, oftentimes *surely*, and other forms of confirmation, and more rarely oathes and swearing, condescending to speak to us men in our own language.

And this is my first argument for the lawfulness of an oath, Gods own example of swearing for more security and confirmation. And it seems to be a very strong argument. For if the Lord most wise and good see it meet to swear to man, and conceive it a suitable expedient for mans debility and weakness, and a crutch or stay to his faith: how much more may there be required an oath from men? It is impossible that God should lye or deceive. If he make but the most simple and naked promise or threatening, that is enough for his Majesty: he is truth and faithfulness and justice and goodnesse it self, and he cannot the least be moved from performing what he sayes, yet he sees it convenient and profitable for mans help to confirm his word by oath, As I live, I swear by my holinesse, by my excellencie, by my great name, I swear by my self, which is to say, Let me be no God, let me have no truth, no holinesse, or excellency in me, let me be challenged for a false God, and no credit at all given to me, if I shall not make good my word, and perform what I say. It is of his goodnesse and superabundant rich grace, that the Lord makes unto us promises; and it is yet from the more abundance of his grace that he confirms it with an oath: and as the Lord would not doe it if there were not cause; so being done, it gives us to understand that an oath as such is not simply evil. For then it would be unbecoming his holiness, and infinite glory. If it were altogether sinful to swear, how could the Lord swear? It is evident that an oath hath its reason and foundation in nature, and doth suppose some preexistent reason on our behalf, and therefore for our confirmation the Lord sweareth, that there might be no room at all left for doubting. For if we will not trust God upon his oath, we will not trust him indeed; we are most incredulous wretches, and do in effect proclaim God to be a liar, such a one as is not to be trusted, 1 John 1. 10.

Perhaps you may object, there may be some ground or colour for an oath since the fall, because of the great depravedness of our natures,

and gross unbelief and hardness of heart: but *Adam* was perfect, and so there could be no use of an oath to him.

I do answer, that *Adam* had in some sort imperfection in him, but he had no culpable imperfection in him. He was created sinless, but not so free from falling into sin, but that he might (as afterwards he did) fall into sin; now as God saw it meet to give him a law to observe, and to back that law by a threatening, so he might see it convenient for *Adams* good and for more security and confirmation besides the bare and simple threatening to use an asseveration or solemn denunciation for more security and certioration. *Surely if thou eat of this tree thou shalt dye.* Take heed to thy self, thou art not so beyond all possibility of falling, but that it is possible for thee to sin, and if thou do at all sin, *Verily thou shalt dye, Surely I will not spare to punish thee.* I do not contend that the words set down *Gen. 2. 17.* are an oath; and I think it beyond all doubt that they are more than a simple or naked threatening. And that's a degree towards an oath. This was in Paradise, during mans estate of innocency: so that God is our chief pattern for swearing, and his example is a chief warrant, and it is apparently grounded in reason: and therefore I may warrantably say by way of Antithesis to *W. Pen*, *Treatise of oaths, P. 12. Manente ratione legis, manet & lex.* The first oath, asseveration or protestation being upon reason and preexistent grounds, where there are the same grounds and reasons there is the same use of an oath. And *a majori ad minus valet argumentum affirmative*, if there was use for an oath, asseveration, or solemn denunciation in Paradise during the state of innocency, and that for more security and confirmation to *Adam*; much more do fallen sinners need the oath of God for the help of our faith. And if we need the oath of God, do we not need the oath of man? or can it be that we can be more confident in man than in God? If an oath be any means of confirmation in its own nature and right use, as hath been evidenced that it is, and as the example of God, and constant use of all nations doth witness; then there can be no reason for the utter abolishment of oaths, while mankind is so impotent and defective as to need all such helps and wayes: as do any thing conduce to the settlement and confirmation of humane belief and perswasion whether towards God, or towards one another, in things testimonial and credential, such as are not capable of confirmation any other way, save by testimony and affirmation on his part that speaketh or assureth, and belief or giving credit by him that is to be assured.

Also it may be noted out of the Scriptures of truth, that God himself swore to Jesus Christ, *The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedech*, Psal. 110. 4. compared with Heb. 7. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22. Where a comparison is made of the Priesthood of Christ, and the Priesthood under the law, and the preeminence is given to Christ; and this among the rest is added as a note of excellency in the Priesthood of Christ which was not under the law, that Christ was made Priest with an oath, and the oath is set down, God the Father speaking and swearing to Christ, *thou art a Priest for ever*. And hence the Scripture doth gather and make observation that the Priesthood of Christ, and consequently the Gospel Covenant and dispensation was far more excellent and perfect than that of the Law.

And we are taught, Heb. 6. 17, 18. That Gods oath to the Heirs of promise was for confirmation sake, and Jesus Christ is the heir of all things, Heb. 1. 2. And it is agreed upon by all Divines that there was a peculiar covenant or transaction between God the Father and Jesus Christ the mediator and Saviour of the world, distinct from all other Covenants between God and man, and between Christ the mediator and man. And the Scripture would not that this Covenant should be wanting in excellencie and compleatness, but to be above the covenant of Moses and the Levitical Priesthood and administration of old, and therefore the Lord added an oath to the Covenant and Priesthood of Christ, which was not in the other. Now this doth betoken and infer, 1. That an oath from God is a mark of glory and excellency, and did confer special dignity upon Christ and his Priesthood. 2. That even in the priesthood of Christ there was use for an oath, and that for confirmation. For I take that to be an end or reason common to all oaths to be for confirmation, *I have sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedech*. You will ask, to whom doth God intend and direct this oath for confirmation? And it is evident that the words are immediately and firstly directed to Jesus Christ, God speaks to him, *I have sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever*. If any shall further question, what needeth Jesus Christ any confirmation besides his consecration to the office of Mediator, his extraordinary unction, and Gods word of promise, and the wonderful hypostetical union of the two natures in the person of the Son of God? what needed an Oath? It was not for him but for others, the Heirs of promise, that this was added for confirmation. Jesus Christ was impeccable, and had no defect at all, nor could in the least doubt of Gods verity, and so there could be no use of an Oath as to him.

I shall answer, but with submission to others, and liberty of changing my mind, upon further study and enquiry, if need be. It was his own voluntary humility and condescension to mankind, together with his Fathers will and imposition, that he became man, and took upon him the sinless frailties of man, and became so near to us in all things, sin excepted. And can you say it argues any more imperfection on Christs part, that God should confirm his Priesthood with an Oath, than that an Angel from Heaven should be sent to strengthen him? *Luke 22. 43.* or that he should pray with strong crying and tears, and pray whole nights together, and be ignorant as man when the day of Judgment is? All these do argue that he was a man, and he could not be a man but he must needs have humane imperfections, but none that are in the least sinful, nor many of those imperfections which be in us, and yet are not sinful neither. Had there been no sin, nakedness and innocency had been the best Covering and Garment: It will not therefore follow, that because Jesus Christ wore Garments, that he was not altogether innocent. Baptism and Circumcision in the ordinary subjects and receivers did betoken filthiness and impurity: but it will not thence follow, that Christ had any impurity or sin because he was Circumcised and baptized. For it was his own voluntary submission, in concurrence with his Fathers will, which made those Commands at all requisite and necessary to him.

So concerning this matter of swearing, the Lord might confirm his Covenant to Christ by Oath, and this not be needless or superfluous, nor yet Christ be imperfect. For the addition of an Oath is but in the predicament or series of means, and Christ hereby as in other things might be an example to us, of giving just regard and esteem to all means of Gods appointment, and to stoop our wisdom to the wisdom of God: And if the Lord shall say to Christ, I do make thee the Sovereign Priest and Saviour of the world, and for excellency to thee and thy ministration, and for the fulness and plerophory of confirmation, and to testify my abundant love to thee and delight in thee, and the verity and immutability of my counsel, and for thine exceeding joy and support in all thy undertaken work, as also for the benefit and consolation of all thy Members the Heirs of Promise, I do confirm thy Priesthood by my Oath, and swear to thee; If the Lord I say do thus, it behoves us to think that this is with good reason, and that an Oath may be useful to certain ends and intents, where the party sworn to is altogether spotless and innocent. Jesus Christ did

not

not think himself to be above any means of Gods appointment and imposition. *Wisdom is justified of all her Children.* And Christ being the most absolute Pattern and Child of Wisdom did well approve and justify the Lord in adding an Oath, and thereby confirming to him his Priesthood; and the glory thereon depending for ever. All which makes for the use and reverence of an Oath.

Object. Some may say, *Because God in Scripture hath frequently sworn, may we therefore? May we make God our Example in all things, and imitate God in every thing he doth?*

Ans. We are commanded in Scripture, *Be ye holy, for I am holy; and, Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.* We are not to imitate God in such things as are incommunicable, and proper to God alone, as to make the world; to give Laws to the world; or to do things miraculous utterly above the power of Nature: We may not usurp the place and authority of God, and attempt to be equal with him in any thing. But in such things as God doth command, and propose unto us to imitate him in, as in the detestation and shunning of Vice, and in the practice of Vertue, such things we may and must imitate God in, as in holiness, uprightness, justice, goodness, truth, equity, innocency, and the like. Now swearing is one of those things in which we may imitate God, and Gods practice herein is a warrant to us in weighty cases to swear. For what is swearing in the sum and upshot of it, but appealing to God and the engaging of our credit, and the adventuring of all we have upon the verity of what we affirm? The truth is but one. A simple affirmation or negation is the matter of an Oath. It is grant that a simple or naked affirmation and an Oath do differ: but in many things they agree, *ma-
gis & minus non variant speciem.* For God to promise only, and for him to promise with an Oath, as to the thing promised both are the same, as to the promiser both are the same, and as to him to whom the promise is made. The truth is but one in both. If the thing be false or feigned, the Oath cannot make it true or sincere; if it be true and real, it is so without the Oath. Both swearing and not swearing depend upon the credit and veracity of the swearer.

You will grant that I may and must imitate God in saying and affirming the truth. And why may I not imitate God in confirming the truth? An Oath is nothing but the highest confirmation of truth by testimony and appeal. You will allow me more than barely to affirm or deny; you will allow me to say, Verily, Surely, Of a truth, I protest,

protest, and the like; all which are a degree of confirmation. Now shew any substantial reason why it should be lawful and a duty to confirm the truth in a first or second degree, and simply unlawful to confirm it in a third or fourth degree.

We will suppose four degrees of confirming the truth. Suppose Verily to be one, Verily Verily twice said to be two degrees; I protest, or I call Heaven and Earth to witness to be a confirmation in the third degree; and an Oath to be the fourth and utmost degree of all. All do grant it lawful to use the first and the second degree; most, if not all, hold it lawful to confirm the truth in the third, and saving a very few, all think the fourth degree lawful.

Now if confirmation in the last degree were simply sinful, then also the first and second and third degree would be sinful. For, every degree of sin, is sin; and if confirmation in the first, second and third degree be lawful, the addition of a fourth degree cannot be unlawful in its own nature. Accidents and adventitious respects may make it unlawful, but in, and of, it self it is lawful.

In testimony, or witness-bearing, the verity of the thing affirmed or denied is the thing which both sides strive about. You would know if there be such a place, or state; as Hell beyond this Life. I tell you, saith God, that there is. All that you would be satisfied of is the truth of this point, if indeed there be a Hell. I do assure you, saith God, that there is, As verily as I am God there is, I confirm to you by all the truth that is in me. This is the sum of swearing, and what is there in all this vicious and unwarrantable to imitate?

Arg. 2. I bring this Argument to prove it lawful to swear. The sum of all Gods Laws is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and strength, and thy Neighbour as thy self: to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. Now it is not against any of all these to swear, or take an Oath, in weighty cases. Let it be shewn wherein I offend against God, mine own soul, or my Neighbours, by swearing? I do honour God by religious swearing, do not in the least detract from his glory, or concern his attributes, but I acknowledge and adore the Name of God; neither do I wound mine own soul, or do any harm to my Neighbours. It is no offence to God to confirm the truth by a solemn invocation of his Name, and appealing to him for the witness and confirmation of it. I shall make this more plain by the following Argument.

Arg. 3. The custome of all Nations ever since the World began

the practice of all Gods People and the Church of God to this very day doth prove that swearing is lawful, and of God. I shall run through the Old and New Testament, and confine my self to them. We find *Abram*, the Father of the faithful, and the Friend of God, swearing, *Gen. 14. 22.* and swearing to *Abimelech*, *Gen. 21. 22, 23, 24.* and *Abimelech* to him: they swear both of them, *v. 31.* And hence it is plain that swearing was in use then, and great esteem was had of it, and it was counted a sacred and inviolable thing, because *Abimelech* and *Phicol* his chief Captain sued unto *Abraham* for a League or Covenant to be between them by Oath, as a chief means of security and confiding in one another. *Abraham* being in great care about a Wife for his Son, makes his Servant to swear to him, and the Servant did swear, *Gen. 24. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.* By this it appears that *Abraham* had instructed his Servants in the right use of an Oath, *Gen. 18. 19.* We find godly *Isaak* treading in the steps of his worthy Father, and at the instance of *Abimelech*, with *Abuzzath* one of his Friends, and *Phicol* his chief Captain, swearing to each other, with feasting and gladness, *Gen. 26. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.* We find godly *Jacob* treading in the steps of his worthy Progenitors, vowing a Vow, and binding his Soul with the sacred Cord of an Oath to God. For a Vow is a promissory Oath to God, *Gen. 28. 20, 21, 22.* We find him and his idolatrous Father-in Law and Uncle *Laban* making an Oath and Covenant to each other, *Gen. 31. 44, 45, 46, 47, &c.* And *Jacob* sware by the fear of his Father *Isaak*, *v. 53.* And when he came to dye he made his Son *Joseph* to swear to him not to bury him in *Egypt*, but to carry his Corps into *Canaan*, *Gen. 47. 29, 30, 31.* We find godly *Joseph* treading likewise in the steps of his worthy Fathers, and taking an Oath of his Brethren that they should carry his Bones with them out of *Egypt*, *Gen. 50. 24, 25.* By these four instances it appears that swearing was in use both with Idolaters and true Worshipers of God in the first Ages of the World, many hundreds of years before the giving of the Law to *Moses* at Mount *Sinai*.

As touching Gods People after their passing out of *Egypt*, and during their abode in the Wilderness, there is no question to be made but that Oaths and swearing lawful and approved of God were in use amongst them. For God himself, it is not denied, commanded and prescribed them Oaths; and in sundry cases enjoined an Oath for the ending of Controversies. After their passage over *Jordan*, and before they had conquered any considerable part of *Canaan*, *Joshua* and the

the Elders of *Israel* bind themselves by an Oath to the *Gibeonites*, at which the People were angry; but having laid upon them a solemn Oath, they durst not go back, *Jos.* 9. 15, 18, 19. And the breach of this Oath in King *Saul's* time some hundreds of years after was punished by God with three years Famine, and the slaughter of seven of *Saul's* Sons, *2 Sam.* 21. 1, 2, &c. 6, &c. And before this we find a solemn Oath passed between the good Spies and *Rahab* for the saving of her and her Kindred, she being instant with them to swear for her greater security; and they sware to her, *Jos.* 2. 12, &c. By this it is plain what esteem was had of Oaths, and in what use they were then. The two Tribes and an half being suspected of a great Crime of revolting from God in building an Altar at *Jordan*, they clear themselves by a kind of Oath or solemn Appeal to God, *Jos.* 22. 22, &c. *Samson*, one of the Lords Worthies, in jeopardy of his Life requiring of the Men of *Judah* an Oath that they would not fall upon him themselves, *Judg.* 15. 12. We find *Joshua* laying a Curse or Adjuration upon the Man that should build *Jericho*, *Jos.* 6. 26. and the execution of this Curse upon *Hiel* the *Bethelite* long after, *1 King.* 16. 34. We read of *David* often swearing, *1 Sam.* 20. 3. and most notable is the Oath and Covenant between him and *Jonathan*, both for matter and manner and solemnity, *v.* 12, &c. *v.* 16, 17, 42. They renew their Covenant, *1 Sam.* 23. 18. *Saul* would needs have *David* swear to him, and he sware to him, *1 Sam.* 24. 21, 22. Another time swearing, or something like it, and that lawfully, *1 Sam.* 26. 16, and swearing to *Bathsheba*, *1 King.* 1. 13. and again upon his Death-bed swearing to her, *v.* 29, 36. *Pf.* 119. 106. *I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.* And *Pf.* 132. 2, 3, 4, 5. He sware unto the Lord and vowed unto the mighty God of *Jacob*, *Surely, I will not come into mine House; &c.* *Solomon* in his Prayer to God at the Dedication of the Temple prays, saying, *If any Man trespass against his Neighbour, and an Oath be laid upon him so cause him to swear, and the Oath come before thine Altar in this House; then hear thou in Heaven, &c.* *1 King.* 8. 31, 32. *2 Chr.* 6. 22, 23. The poor famished and half-dead *Egyptians* being in treaty with *David* for his Life, would needs have *David* to swear to him, *1 Sam.* 14. &c. 15. Notable is the Oath and Covenant of King *Ash* and all the People with him, approved by the Lords Prophet, and the Lords Countenance upon them, *They entered into a Covenant to seek the Lord God of their Fathers with all their heart, and with all their soul; and they sware*

unto

unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with Trumpets, and with Cornets; and all Judah rejoiced at the Oath, for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire, and he was found of them, and the Lord gave them rest round about, 2 Chr. 15. 12, 13, 14, 15. This is a most clear Testimony for swearing in the like case. The words of good Obadiah to Elijah, *As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no Nation or Kingdom, whither my Lord hath not sent to seek thee, and when they said he is not there, he took an Oath of the Nation and Kingdom, that they knew him not,* 1 King. 18. 10. We read of Josiah and the people with him making a Covenant before the Lord, 2 Chr. 34. 31, 32. This was the same for substance with that of *Asa's* forementioned. The same we have *Exra* 10. 3, 16. *Nehemiah* took an Oath of the people to put away their exactions. *Also I shook my Lap, and said, So God shake out every Man from his House, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus he be shaken out and emptied,* Nehem. 5. 12, 13. All the Lords people entered into a Curse, and into an Oath, to walk in Gods Law, &c. Nehem. 9. 38. Nehem. 10. 29.

I forbear to cite any more Old Testament proofs under this Argument. I shall come to the New Testament. And first we have our blessed Saviour in the Book of *John* more than twenty times using the words, *Verily Verily*. I shall not contend that these are an Oath. And no Man will deny but they are a great deal more than a bare or simple affirmation. I have before cited *Paul* in many places, either swearing, as most think, or very near to swearing, as all think, as when he saith, *I call God for a record upon my Soul, As the truth of Christ is in me, Behold before God I lye not.* And for the practice of the New Testament times it is beyond all doubt that swearing was in use among the Jews and all about them, and accounted lawful. Some take it to be an adjuration when *Paul* saith, *I charge you by the Lord, that this Epistle be read unto all the holy Brethren,* 1 Thess. 5. 27. So also 1 Tim. 5. 21. and 2 Tim. 4. 1. But most expressly we have an holy Angel lifting up his hand to Heaven, and swearing by him that liveth for ever and ever, Rev. 10. 5, 6. Compared with Dan. 12. 7. And for conclusion of this Argument let it be noted what St. *Paul* or who ever was the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 6. 16. saith, *Men verily swear by the greater,* he speaks here of swearing as in ordinary and common use, both then and in all ages of the World; and he doth not tax it of any vice or harm, but mentions it as an allowable practice, no Man

questioning it; and shewing the End and Institution of an Oath, to be for confirmation and the ending of strife; and so God himself that he might give to his people fullest grounds of consolation, confirmed his Promise by an Oath. By all which it is evident that at all times and in all places by good and choicest Men, swearing hath been in use, and accounted most sacred, and the practice thereof in weighty cases never questioned.

Arg. 4. The Spirit of God in Scripture doth approve of swearing, as *Pf. 15. 4.* It is one note of a Citizen of Heaven, *he sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.* *Pf. 63. 11.* *The King shall rejoice in God, every one that sweareth by him shall glory.* *Jer. 4. 2.* *Thou shalt swear the Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness, and the Nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.* And so evident is the Spirits Testimony to the Oaths and swearing of the Saints formentioned, that it cannot be denied: As that of *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, David* in the Book of *Psalms*, when he sware to *Saul*, and to *Bathsheba*, and the Oath between him and *Jonathan*, the Oath of King *Asha* and his People, *Ezra*, and *Nehemiah*, and the Angel in *Rev.* all these have the stamp of the Spirits approbation upon them, and nothing of blot or impurity is charged on them, nor can be as to the matter of swearing. And we are commanded to be followers and imitators of the Saints, that is, in good and harmless actions, *Heb. 6. 12.* And Saint Paul saith, *Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of Peace shall be with you, Phil. 4. 9.* And it cannot be gainsaid that Saint Paul's speeches, some of them, are either Oaths, or so near to swearing, that it is hard to say what difference there is between an Oath and them. And the stamp of God's approbation is upon them, and they are part of Scripture, and commended to the Saints and Churches for laudable and godly imitation.

Arg. 5. I shall offer this Argument against Quakerism in the matter of Oaths. If it be wholly sinful to take an Oath, then there is no such sin as perjury and being forsworn. But perjury remains a sin to this day, and one of the most horrid sins, against the light of Nature, a most Conscience-wasting sin, *1 Tim. 1. 9, 10.* The Law is made for perjured Persons. As there is a difference between a simple promise, or affirmation, Yea and Nay, and an Oath; so there is a difference between lying and perjury. Every promise or affirmation is not an Oath; but every Oath is an affirmation or negation, assertory or promissory,

missory, and more: And by analogy every false Oath is a lye, but every lye is not perjury or a false Oath. The Holy Ghost doth distinguish them, *Prov.* 6. 16, 17, 18, 19. and *1 Tim.* 1. 10. *Ceteris paribus*, perjury is a grosser sin than simple lying. Every Mans Conscience will assent to that. Perjury is accounted a most hainous sin by all Mankind. Scripture is full of Instances of God's vengeance upon perjured Persons. Seldome do such Persons go unpunished in this Life. Read Gods terrible Curse against such, *Zeck.* 5. 1, 2, 3, 4. *Mal.* 3. 5. And God's punishment upon the King of *Judab* for breaking Oath and Covenant with the King of *Babylon*, *Ezek.* 17. 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, &c. compar'd with *2 King.* 24. 20. And God's punishment upon *Israel* in King *David's* time with three years Famine, forementioned, for breaking Oath with the *Gibeonites*, it being an Oath lying upon all the Nation from *Joshuab's* time. King *Herod* had such reverence of an Oath, that rather than break it he would, and did, murder *John the Baptist*.

I cannot see how this Argument can be avoided. For, as if there be no truth-speaking, there can be no lying: so if there be no oathing or swearing, there can be no forswearing, or false-swearing. *Rectum est index sui & obliqui*: A crooked Line doth suppose and denote that there is a straight Line, from which the crooked is a defection, or else it could not be known. Sin is nothing but a swerving from the Rule, or a transgression of the Law. Now we are certain that there is such a sin as Perjury distinct from all other sins. I would know what Law or Rule Perjury or false-swearing is a breach of? The Ninth Commandment is, *Thou shalt not bear false Witness*. And another Commandment is, *Thou shalt not forswear thy self*. These are Prohibitions. Now every Prohibition is a Law, and every Law is the Law-makers Will appointing and commanding what to be done, and what not to be done; and whethersoever be named, both are included. When the Law saith, Thou shalt not forswear thy self, there is included of necessity this Precept, Thou shalt at all times, when thou swearest, swear the very truth. He that forbiddeth Drunkenness, commandeth Sobriety. He that forbiddeth Adultery, commandeth Chastity. If there be no Vice, there is no Vertue. For Vice is nothing else but a contrariety to Vertue, as Sin is to Duty. It is true, I grant, that if there be no perjury there may yet remain lying. But there is besides lying, such a Sin as perjury, whose definition is diverse from that of lying, whose malignity and guilt is far more hainous, whose punishment

ment is greater, and every Mans Conscience that is not quite void of feeling doth dread perjury far more.

This shall suffice for positive proof. I shall make the Point more clear by invalidating the contrary proofs and reasons as I find them largely set down in a pompous Treatise of Oaths, subscribed by 13 principal Quakers, and composed by *William Pen* and *Richard Richardson*, presented to the King and Parliament, and Printed 1675. I shall not think my self bound to answer to every word there said, nor to transcribe their words and arguments at large. I shall do their Cause right, and not conceal one jot that I know is of any force against oath-taking and swearing. This Treatise consists of ten distinct Reasons, and abundance of Citations and Allegations out of ancient and modern Writers of all sorts, for which reason I count it a pompous Treatise, as being set off with a great many names, and making a fair flourish. I must acquaint the Reader that there are many Fathers cited in that Treatise of great name and eminency in the Church of God, whose learning and holiness none doth question: but whether the Citations be true or not I am not able to examine, wanting the Authors themselves, and not able to furnish my self with them. And I am loth to overload this small defence of Oaths, being under necessity to be as brief as I can; and it is Scripture and Reason which doth most weigh with me, and the best weapons of defence that I have: and therefore saving all due reverence to all such names as be of note and eminency in that Treatise, I shall say nothing to the Argument from Authority, though as small as my reading is, and as poor as my Library is, and it is the least and lowest of all Mr. *Baxter's* three sorts set down in his *Christian Directory*, I could make a shift to furnish some Pages with Authorities and Citations, both out of Christian and Pagan Writers, in defence of Oaths and swearing, in such cases as hath been accustomed by the People of God in all Ages of the World. But the substance and sinews of the Book lies within the ten Reasons against oath-taking. One of the ten Reasons is only against the particular form of swearing used by us in *England*. I will forbear to speak of that. Of all the other nine Reasons there is but one that is of any weight; but what will make against swearing at any time as well as swearing under the Gospel.

Their first Reason against Oaths is from the cause and grounds of Oaths, which, say they, is perfidiousness, distrust, and falsehood; these brought in swearing. These being gone there will need no Oaths.

Cessante

Cessante ratio, cessat lex. They presume, that none will deny, and take it for granted, that swearing came in, and therefore ought to go out, with perfidiousness. The Quakers declare that they hate lying as much as perjury, and can no more tell an untruth, than forswear themselves. *Treatise of Oaths*, p. 11, 12, 13.

For Answer to this, Either this Reason utterly makes against the Quakers denial of Oaths, or else it utterly makes against all the Oaths that ever have been in the World, both by God and Man. If the Reasons of an Oath be perpetual, since they fall as much now as ever, then we may retort their own words upon them, the reason of swearing being permanent and continuing, the Law for swearing is still in force. Whatsoever was a just ground and reason of swearing, the same is at this day. An Oath ever was, and so remains for confirmation, and among Men serves for the ending of all strife. This reason of an Oath is still on foot: if it was lawful to swear anciently upon these grounds, why not now?

Why did God himself swear to Jesus Christ, to Noah and all the World never to destroy it by Water again; to Abraham, to David, to Saints and Sinners up and down the Scripture? Why did all the forementioned godly Persons in the Old Testament, and Paul and the holy Angel swear in the New? Was perfidiousness, and distrust, the cause? Either it was a just ground of swearing or not: if it was, then there being the like distrust in the World as was then, swearing is as lawful now as then: if it was not a just cause, then God himself and the holy Angel and all the choicest Saints in Scripture did evil in swearing and bringing in Oaths causelessly.

Their second Reason is much what the same with this, and partly leans upon it. We dare not swear, say the Quakers, because we dare not lye. For us to swear is to do a needless thing, or to suspect our own honesty. The former is to take Gods Name in vain, the latter is to distrust our selves, which we have no reason to do. Should we swear, we should subject the truth to Mens humours, and no difference would appear between honesty and perfidiousness. p. 13, 14.

May I not in Answer hereto, ask the Quakers, Are you holier than God? are you more to be trusted than the Lord? Or are you more honest than Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph? are you more perfect than David and Jonathan, and the choicest Saints of God in Scripture? Doth not this your Reason charge either God or you most deeply? You say you dare not swear, because you dare not lye.

Might

Might not God say this much more than you? Might not all the holy Men in Scripture, forementioned, say it as well as you? Either we must charge you with great pride in thinking to be more holy and pure than God himself, to say nothing of his primest Saints in this World: or we must say that this your Reason against Oaths is most vain and impious, and a charging of God with doing a needless thing, and suspecting himself of falshood. Rather I should think the contrary to your reasoning to be most sound and proper. We cannot lye, and therefore we cannot possibly forswear. Such as cannot lye are the fittest and meekest Persons to swear, of all other. A Lyar will hardly be believed upon his Oath. An honest Mans word is more to be trusted than the Oath of a fraudulent perfidious and self-seeking Knave. If an honest Man declare a thing *ex animo*, his bare affirmation carrieth great credit with it: but if he shall confirm it by Oath, who doubts it then? This Reason doth much reflect upon God, and accuseth him either of doing a needless thing in all the Oaths Recorded of God in Scripture, or of suspecting himself of iniquity and deceit: also it chargeth all his Saints forementioned, whose honesty and piety may well compare with the Quakers.

Their third Reason against swearing is, they fear, lest by complying we should be guilty of Rebellion against the discoveries God hath made to our Souls of his ancient way of truth, and consequently of concealing his goodness to us. We should deprive God of his glory, and the World of great benefit, should we comply with Oaths. God only hath begot this conscientiousness in us, and we dare not put this Light under a Bushel, p. 15.

Still this Reason also reflecteth upon God, and accuseth God to himself by his Laws and Practice, and by the Practice of all his Saints and Churches approving swearing; and the Quakers make it part of their conscientiousness to be against all swearing, and say that God hath begotten this tenderness in them. But by this we know that the Light you pretend to is Darknes, and the things which you entitle God to are your errors, and the ancient way of truth is for Oaths and swearing. Your Light and Conscience agreeth not with the Practice of God himself, his holy Angels, his choicest Saints, and all his Churches both old and new. Cease to Father your errors upon God, and call not blindness and mistake, right conscientiousness; for God owneth none such. We know you are mistaken.

Their fourth Reason is, That the present Age is exceedingly debauched,

bauched. Oaths have lost their ancient force. We would prove to so false an Age that there is a People who are so far from vain and false swearing, that they dare not swear the truth, but their *Yes* and *No* shall out-weigh other Mens Oaths, and that with a free offer of sustaining double punishment, in case of miscarriage. This only Reason, say they, were we destitute of all other allegations would be a strong dissuasive from swearing, p. 15, 16.

You do well to have good conceits of your selves, and censure others. It is the Hypocrites mark to espye a Mote in anothers Eye, and not perceive a Beam in his own. But why have Oaths lost their ancient force? Are there no honest People in all the World but Quakers? If there be any, why may not an Oath have an awe upon them? but if none be honest but Quakers, why may not an Oath have an awful influence upon you? You grant that at the first institution Oaths had a great awe upon Mens Consciences: If then Mens Consciences, yours, or others, be good and tender, by your own concessions swearing cannot but have a mighty awe upon you and them. But you are so far from vain and false swearing, that you dare not swear truth; and this you account your praise and perfection above all others. But why then did God swear? why did he command swearing of old? why did his Angels swear, and his holiest Saints? If you condemn us, will you also say that all these were debauched, and had no reverence of an Oath? Because there is great excess in Meat and Drink, will you therefore, to cure this Malady of the times, have all People utterly to forbear all eating and drinking? Because there is great excess in Apparel, will you have us all to go naked? But this is an old trick of Satan's to cry down God's Holiness and Rules, as not holy and strait enough: and to invent a holiness and stricings of our own, seemingly, stricter than Gods; when indeed it is but the invention of pride and a fleshly mind, and a device of Satan transforming himself into an Angel of Light, under pretence of zeal and holiness, bringing in sensuality and self-exalting, Monkish Righteousness. We desire all People to take warning by your falls. You are far gone which write at this rate.

Their fifth Reason is from God's Omnipresence. This, they say, rightly understood, makes against swearing, p. 16.

Had you said against vain and false swearing, it had been a good Argument. But this Reason doth equally hold against all swearing at any time, and so you run into all the forementioned evils. You charge

Charge God himself, his Saints, his Angels, all the famous recorded Oaths in Scripture. God was always omnipresent, and this is one Reason for swearing: for hereby we appeal to God as present, and feeling our hearts, and knowing all our secrets.

Their sixth Reason against Oaths is, That God doth not concur in Oaths; if the Swearer swear falsely God doth not convince others by his vengeance upon the perjured party; and if he swear truly, God doth not by any aid on his part or any countenance, such as the party for his true Testimony deserveth, manifest any liking of the Oath. An evident sign, say they, that God approveth not of any such Oaths and imprecations, p. 17.

By this it should seem you grant, that if God did apparently give blessing to upright swearing, and avenge perjury, at least wise so as to convince others, that then Oaths were lawful. Certainly God is the revenger of all sin, and the rewarder of all uprightness. Will you teach God how to reward and punish? Must it be an Argument against swearing, because God doth not presently and forthwith smite every perjured person with sudden death, or some eminent and conspicuous judgment as he did *Ananias* and *Sapphira*? or that he doth not accept and approve upright swearing, because he doth not make the same evident to our eyes and senses by signal manifestations? What is become of your great Principle of the Light within, which you say, convinceth of all sin and duty? Suppose a perjured person prosper in this World, and such as swear truly prosper not outwardly; will you therefore infer that perjury is good, and godly upright swearing rejected of God? We are to believe more than we yet see. And we are sure and certain that God will revenge all false Oaths, and reward all such as swear uprightly. This is certain as if we saw it. Faith is the evidence of things not seen. I may retort this Argument upon your selves; thus, Swearing must needs be lawful, because God hath never to this day suffered perjury to go unrevenge'd, nor true and upright swearing to go unrewarded. Read *Zech. 5. 1, 2, 3, 4. Zech. 8. 16, 17, 18. Mal. 3. 5. Psal. 13. 4. Psal. 16. 11. Pro. 6. 16, 17, 18, 19. Pro. 19. 5, 9. Pro. 21. 28.* If sin be the greatest of evils, then it is its own great punishment; and consequently, should God forbear to punish a perjured person in this Life rather than by his sin, and the fear, edness, guilt, and remorse of his Conscience, he would have little cause to boast, or thank himself so have escaped all punishment. Sin and guilt now lying upon the Conscience, and Hell after all, what think

think you by this punishment? And on the other side, on the behalf of the upright sweater; is it no reward to have a good Conscience, to be innocent, to have truth in the inward parts known to God, though others do not? A good Conscience now, and Heaven after all, is the reward of all such as swear in uprightness. If God revenge all Perjury, he will be sure to bless all upright swearing. Deny it if you can, and do your best to evade this Argument. Go to any forsworn Person in all the World, and ask him if he do not repent him of his Sin, and have not something of God's condemning sentence already upon his Soul, and is convicted by his own Conscience, and would fain get loose from his Conscience if he could. Is not this a proof that God is the detester and revenger of all perjury? If it be not to others, doubtless it is to him, and an unanswerable Argument for Oaths; for by this, as by a Seal or palpable Testimony and most convincing to the Conscience, God doth give witness for himself that he cannot endure false Oaths; and if he cannot endure false Oaths, will it not follow that he highly loveth true Oaths, and will never fail to bless all such? Five Sins, saith a godly Divine of our own, do very rarely go unpunished during this Life, but sooner or later God's vengeance doth overtake them; Murder, persecuting God's People, Sacrilege, Perjury, and Rebellion against Parents. If we had no Scripture, there is a great deal in the Providence of God, and in the Consciences of all the World, to prove the lawfulness of an Oath and swearing, and the greatness of the sin of Perjury, and the vengeance which hangs over all forsworn Persons, your own Reasons and Arguments are Truth's best Weapons against your self and your Cause.

Their seventh Reason against Oaths is, That it is a presumptuous tempting of God to summon him as a Witness, not only to our barren, but trivial businesses, too low for an earthly Prince to attend. p. 17. It is vain and insolent to think that a Man when he pleaseth can make the great God a Witness or a Judge in any matter, to appear by some signal approbation in judgment, to help or forsake him, as the truth or falseness of his Oath requires, when he saith, *So help me God*.

Ans. We reject all vain and useless, as well as false, Oaths. We defend no Oaths, but such as be necessary and weighty, such as God by Scripture-Laws anciently allowed and prescribed, such as the choicest Saints in Scripture have practised; and in consimular weighty cases having like Reasons. God is present and witness to all we think and say and do; and we cannot if we would exclude or hinder him

from being the supreme Judge and Witness of all our wayes. When we swear, we do not summon in God for a witness. We do invoke his Name, and attest his truth and presence, and appeal to his all-seeing and most righteous Eye. If this be to summon God as a witness, we yield it, and defend it to be lawful and godly, and far from tempting God, or doing affront to his Highness. For we do it with religious regulated fear, *Ecc. 9. 2.* This Reason makes as much against swearing before Christ's time as since, and both alike. When we say, *So help me God*, we do not tie or limit God to appear by any signal appearance in judgment for manifestation of the Oath whether true or false; if true, forthwith to reward it; if false, to revenge it by some new and uncouth way. Conscience under God is Gods great Witness, Judge, Rewarder, and Tormentor. The greatest rewards and punishments are reserved to another World. Christians know and believe this. God is free to reward or punish as he sees meet: but it cannot be, that for every Sin God should presently smite the Sinner, no nor for every gross Sin, with present death, or some such great punishment. He might if he would. We deserve it. But his wisdom and clemency will not, and should it be, the World would soon be at an end, many of those that now be in Heaven would have been in Hell, and much of Gods glory would have been obscured. It is sufficient that all, sooner or later, shall have according to their doings, and that some be made Examples for warning to the rest; and that God do sometimes go out of his common and ordinary Road in more conspicuous and strange and extraordinary mercies and judgments, rewards and punishments, for the better guard and security of his Laws, the preventing of sin, the awakening and startling of the dull and sluggish and secure, the preservation of his ordinary works in esteem, the encouragement of the Saints, and the admiration and praise of his glorious and dreadful name, by all and in all.

The eighth Reason is not against swearing it self, but against our form and custome of swearing, by a Book, laying on of the hand, kissing it, &c. p. 18. This I shall pass by.

The ninth Reason is the only seeming weighty Reason. Were the Oath the most inoffensively form'd, we have both the Example and Precept of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ against swearing, never that we read of using any further asseveration than what in *English* amounts to *Verily, Verily; truly truly, Mat. 5. 33, 34, 35, 36, 37. Pag. 19.* Christ, say the Quakers, gave forth more excellent Precepts

cepts than those under the Law, and that the *Jews* were permitted swearing in the same sense as they were permitted divorce, for the hardness of their hearts, and that Christ took away the liberty of divorce saving in case of Fornication; but did utterly take away all swearing, because it was of evil. And they cite Bishop *Sanderson de Jura*. p. 141. That it was not needful that Christ should forbid what was forbidden in it self, or was always unlawful; which vain swearing was, and is, by the third Commandment, p. 19, 20.

Christ, say they, makes those Oaths unlawful now which were lawful under the Law, and expounds himself, *Mat.* 23. And they alledge *Jam.* 5. as concurrent herewith, p. 21, 22. But their main Reason against all swearing, they say, is from those words of Christ, *Let your yea, be yea; and your nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil*, p. 23. Whence they infer that every Oath being more than yea, and nay, cometh of evil.

Yea, and nay, say they, cannot be intended of just the same words, and no more, nor no other; provided they are not of a higher strain, but of the same degree of speech, importing a plain assertion or denial of a thing. p. 24. Say they, such is the advance from *Moses* to Christ, *Jew* to Christian, that as the Christian needs not the *Jews* curb, so his lye is greater than the *Jews* perjury; because his yea and nay ought to be of more value than the *Jews* Oath. And p. 11. God dispensed with swearing by his Name to his People of *Israel*; that he might take them off from swearing by false Gods. So that swearing is only better than Idolatry. And p. 151. What God dispensed with under the Law he resolved to remove under the Gospel, and to wind up things to a higher pitch of truth and righteousness, from Adultery in the act, to Adultery in the thought; from revenge, to sufferance; from true swearing to no swearing at all. This is their *Achilles*, and this one Argument containing in it Christ's words, and *James's*, which seemingly forbid all swearing, is the only thing of weight that I know can be alledged against swearing.

For answer hereto let us, 1. Suppose these words not writ and made known, and that the Gospel had neither Christ's, nor *James's* words; then sure *Quakers*, and all, would allow Oaths to be lawful. It will then follow, that to all such as these words have not come, nor rational means afforded for the conveyance of them, to all such swearing is lawful.

2. That it is not Christ's intent, nor *James's*, to prohibit all swear-

ing I shall evidence by these Reasons. 1. Great caution is to be used in the expounding of Scripture. God forbid we should wrong any honest Mans words, and take them in a wrong sense; how much more the Word of God and Jesus Christ? since also the danger is so great, and a heavy Curse is pronounced against all that shall add to, or take from, the words of God and Christ set down in Scripture. Words do but express the Speakers mind. Therefore in expounding Scripture we are to do our best to lift out what might be the true meaning of the Lord by these words: Christ saith, *I am the Door of the Sheep. I am the Vine and my Father is the Husband-man*; we will not therefore say that Christ is literally a Door, a Vine. Christ saith in this fifth of *Mat.* *If thy right eye offend thee pluck it out: if thy right hand offend thee cut it off.* Shall we therefore every time we offend with our eye and hand, pluck out the one and cut off the other; supposing we could do so, which can be but once so done? Mortifie thy lust, and spare thy eye and hand, save in a case of extraordinary and most rare necessity seldom or never falling out. So Christ might say, *Swear not at all*, and yet not intend the abrogation of all Oaths. He saith else-where, *Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow turn not thou away.* Yet may I not give to every one that asketh me: he may ask what I have not, he may ask an unreasonable request: nor am I bound to lend to all that would borrow. Conscience and discretion forbid it in many cases. We are therefore not to wrest our Saviour's meaning.

2. That which the Quakers take hold of in Christ's words as making most against all swearing, in my apprehension makes mostly for all due and regular godly swearing. *But say ye, he said; and you may say; for what order is more than these, cometh of evil.* Whence it seems plain that Christ doth not condemn any Oath as evil and unlawful, which was not so before his speaking of those words; and that he doth not so much constitute a new Law not in force before, but doth expound the old. And yet admitting Christ in this case to make no new duty nor constitute no new sin, but to give a true Exposition of the Law already extant and in force; yet may Christ's Exposition be counted for a Law, though that Law might be in force before. For Christ is both God and Man, and he is not a bare Expositor of the Law, but a Law-maker also; and the words as coming from his Mouth are a Law, though also there might be the same Law generally or expressly, written in Scripture, or contained in Nature, already and long before on foot in the World. *1 Joh. 2. 7, 8. I write no new Command*

Commandment unto you, but an old Commandment which ye had from the beginning. Again, a new Commandment I write unto you: Christ's words may be both an Exposition and a Law; also they may be a new Law; and yet but the Law which was old, and from the beginning, new published by him. And we cannot construe the meaning of Christ to be any other without unfufferable mischiefs to follow.

1. If Christ forbid all Oaths, as evil, and declare and pronounce all Oaths to come from evil; then I do not see how he himself can escape being judged of evil. For Christ is God, and the Old Testament abounds with Oaths of God; and if all Oaths be evil, then God's Oaths are; and so Christ condemns himself, and all the Trinity, of evil. For every Person in the Trinity is God. We must never admit that Construction which maketh God himself the most offending Party, who hath both sworn himself frequently, and long before *Moses's* time taught his Saints and worshippers the nature, use, and conveniency of an Oath; and to this day hath born testimony and approbation to all just and upright swearing, and detested, and revenged all perjury.

2. Who dare say, or will expound, the Oaths of *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph* before the Law, to be evil, and come from evil? by what Reason, or Law, will they judge them to be evil? There was then no written Law. The Law, or Light, of Nature sanctified and made holy did not then, nor doth now, judge them to be evil; nor doth any godly Man so judge. Who will say that the Oath of King *Asa* and his People performed with all their heart, and with great joy, God testifying his approbation and good liking of it, was evil? *2 Chr. 15. 12, 13, 14, 15.* The same I say of the Oaths of *Nehemiah, Ezra,* and the returned Captives; as also the Angel, *Dan. 12.* and the express Oath of the Angel, *Rev. 10.* long after Christ's words. Certainly he should much wrong Christ's words, that should say these Oaths are evil. The same also I may say of the Oath between *Jonathan* and *David*; and the Oath mentioned *Pf. 119.* and *Pf. 132.* Christ without all doubt never meant to condemn all these Oaths as evil, and so to abrogate them.

3. If we shall take Christ's words utterly to forbid every thing more than yea and nay, and above bare and simple affirming and denying, then Christ himself is condemned for mentioning so often *Verily, Verily*; and *Paul* is condemned for saying, *I protest, and I call God for a record upon my Soul, and as the truth of Christ is in me*; and many more

more such speeches before cited. And then also it is utterly unlawful so much as to say, surely, of a truth, truly, and the like. For it is evident that all these, the least and lowest of them, are more than bare yea and nay, or a simple affirming or denial. If you will have every thing sinful which is above simple yea-ing and nay-ing, then the most usual and harmless Phrases being a step or degree above yea and nay in confirmation cannot be used : and so Quakers themselves will be found as guilty as any.

Obj. What needed Christ to forbid that which was forbidden before, and to command that which was commanded before ?

Ans. 1. What was forbidden and what was commanded, or what was sin and duty before, might not be so clearly expressed, so plainly delivered, and pronounced in so many words, and it might be requisite to have the thing plainly expressed.

2. The Doctrine of Oaths might be much corrupted, and he might reform it from all the errors and corrupt traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, and others ; and so much the Gospel seems to intimate and hold forth.

3. It is no unusual thing for Scripture to write and repeat the same things, commands, duties, errors, sins, over and over again.

4. Why may you not by the same Reason condemn the greatest part of Scripture, and the writing of it ? For was there not sin and duty in the World before *Moses's* beginning to write the Scriptures ? was it therefore useless to have written Laws and Traditions ?

5. There might be gross disorders and corruptions in Mens Lives in the matter of swearing, and Christ might see it good to express himself thus against swearing, to reform the evil Oaths and Customs of swearing which might then abound. Vain and prophane swearing is but too common a sin in all places at all times.

6. Christ himself was the great Light of the World, the great Prophet and Teacher sent from God ; who was to be Law-giver and Saviour to the World, Superiour to *Moses* and all that went before him, and Master and King to all that came after him, the desire of all Nations, the Head of the Body his Church, and therefore he might well publish Laws with his own Mouth, and Christen old Duties with his new Name, and point all Persons to himself the great Reconciler and Peace-maker to the World, and so he might put a new stamp upon Duties, adding his Authority as new, being only foretold before, but now exhibited in Flesh, and Personally appearing in the World, to put

put away Sin, and bring in everlasting Righteousness, and renew the World with the light of the glory of God in the Incarnation, Conversion, Doctrine, Miracles, Passion, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

7. Never before was there such a Person and Teacher in the World. Christ excelled all that went before him, and therefore with good reason might he renew old Precepts, and partly confirm them, partly explain them, partly apply and press them, and partly divulge and publish them, and gave his own Seal of Authority upon them as most eminent and far excelling all other. For God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, *&c. Heb. 1. 1, 2.*

Obj. But swearing was but a thing permitted for hardness of heart, as was divorce. And Christ took it quite away as a piece of sin and imperfection not to be tolerated in his Kingdom of perfecter light and purity.

Ans. 1. Prove what you say, and answer all Objections, and carry the Cause. 2. Divorce came in with *Moses's Law*; but swearing was in use long before. 3. God himself is the Pattern of swearing, and hath hallowed it as most sacred by his Example. 4. No such Reasons can be rendered for the annulling of Oaths and swearing, as may be for divorce. 5. God was the God of the *Jews* then, as well as of the *Jews* and *Gentiles* now. There was holiness and uprightness and true godliness in the World before Christ appeared in the Flesh. They had the Gospel as well as we, *Heb. 4. 2.* The Gospel was preached to *Abraham*, *Gal. 3. 8.* And he was counted the Father of all them which believe, *Rom. 4. 11.* And to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God was ever the duty of Man, *Mic. 6. 8.* 6. Compare Old Testament-Laws with the new, and the disparity will not be found so great. Though there was much ceremony and sacrificing and outward service and rites and ordinances and much more outward cost under the Law than now, and more temporal promises; and the Gospel and eternal Life, and spiritual priviledges and promises not so clear and bright under the Law, as since; yet then, and always, God did prefer Mercy before Sacrifice; and Obedience before the fat of Rams. He was always a lover of holiness and purity and justice and temperance and goodness and whatsoever was praise-worthy. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and strength, and thy Neighbour as thy self, was God's Law then.

Mm

Man was always God's Creature, and intended for the service and glory of his Maker, and framed for Eternity, and bound by the unalterable Laws of God in Nature to be holy in all manner of Conversation, and to be self-denying and obedient to God in all things; and as God's Creature to depend wholly upon him, and to be to his entire service and praise. 7. And compare Old Testament Saints and Christians with those of the new: and saying that great grace was poured forth upon the Apostles and first Christians and Gospel Churches, to be for a specimen or pattern to succeeding times, and to allure and bring in Proselytes, and spread and disperse the Christian name and glory, and shew forth Christianity to the height, and for all the excellency and eminency of Christ's spirit in many, and most, of the Martyrs, there have been as famous and renowned Old Testament Christians as have been ever since, and they are a great shame to us. *Abel, Noah, Enoch, Abraham, and his Son and Grandsons, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, David, Job, Ezra, Simon, and all the Prophets and Multitudes both of Men and Women were burning and shining Lights, far exceeding the common pitch of most Christians now adays. I will not deny but that there may be something in the spirit of Christ since his appearance, resurrection, and ascension into glory peculiar to the times since, which the Saints of old had not in such peculiarity: the Gospel seems to add a special tincture of Love and a heavenly spirit, and minding spiritual and invisible everlasting riches and glory. But we may think there was something peculiar to those times and the spirit of the Gospel then, which we have not. They were the elder Brother, and the Lot of the First-born was theirs; and he conferred an abundant measure of his spirit upon many of them. O what a spirit of holiness, purity, wisdom, simplicity, and energy was in the Prophets and Pen-men of Scripture! What Divinity and Sublimity and Life and Spirit runs through all the Veins of the Old Testament, especially some more noble and excellent parts of it! And I am sure there were no works of Supererogation then. They did not any of them go above their Rule. Oaths and swearing were no part of their imperfection, nor any such defilements as to be excluded Christ's Kingdom under the Gospel.*

Purity in thoughts and words and looks and gestures was commanded and practised under the Old Testament as well as under the New. It is not true that Jesus Christ advanced Christian Doctrine from not Adultery in the act, to not Adultery in the thought, from revenge

to sufferance. For it was true of old, as well as now, what *Paul* saith of the Law, *Rom. 7.* The Law is holy and spiritual, and the Commandment is holy and just and good. And *Job* says of himself, *I made a Covenant with mine eyes, why then should I look upon a Maid? If my heart hath been deceived by a Woman, if my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart hath walked after mine eyes; and if any blot hath cleaved to my hands, Job 31. 1, 7, 9.* *David* prays, *Pf. 119.* Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. And all the Old Testament Laws do forbid sin in thought. *Jer. 4. 14. Pf. 119. 113.* And as for suffering wrongs, and carriage towards Enemies, who a more eminent Pattern, saving Christ himself, than *David*? *Pf. 35. 12, 13, 14.* Who more eminent for meekness than *Moses*? *Numb. 12.* What honourable encomiums and praises doth the Scripture make of Old Testament Saints? *Heb. 11.* O what Patterns of imitation are they to us! Would God we were like them: though we are not to imitate them in any of their recorded blots or frailties. But this point of Oaths I never understood to be any blot at all in them. Nor is there any thing at all in the Scripture-Text, or in the Reason and Law of God upon Mans Soul leading us to any such Exposition. But the Holy Ghost hath plainly given his approbation thereto, and right informed reason doth readily assent to it.

But this brings me to their last Reason, which is; that swearing is forbidden by the very Nature of Christianity it self, and is unworthy of him that is the Author of it, *p. 24, 25, 26, 27.* It is, they say, a shameful thing to pretend to be a follower of Christ, and yet so far to degenerate from the imitation of him, as to need to swearing, and use Oaths and asseverations dispensed with in weakest times of knowledge, and never known to ancient *Jews* and Christians.

This is answered before. This Reason chargeth God himself, and his holiest Servants. What say you, if God himself hath sworn so often, how comes swearing and Christianity to be so contrary? How come holy Angels and choicest Saints to swear, and how comes it to pass that the Author of Christianity, or godliness, commanded and prescribed it to his People of old? Was not the Religion of the Old Testament through Faith in God, and in the promised *Messiah*, able to make wise unto salvation? You cannot deny but that an Oath was part of the Religion and Christianity then: and if Christianity then and now, for substance, be one and the same, it is a shameful thing in you to charge the Lord himself, and his holy Laws, and most eminent

ment Servants, with degeneration and shame for authorizing and approving Oaths.

I shall for a conclusion manage one Argument for swearing from the Quakers own Principles. They do evidently contradict their own great Principle, which is, that every Man hath a Light within; which Light is the supreme Rule, as being more ancient than the Scriptures. That which was the Rule in the Patriarchs time before *Moses* began to write the Scriptures, that they would have to be the Rule; they call all to this. Now if this must be the Rule and Judge of Oaths, then clearly swearing is lawful and yet in force, and the Quaker is not consistent to his own Principles. For, before any Scripture was writ, swearing was in use, and in great esteem, both by Pagans and Profelytes, by good and bad; and never at all controverted in those first Ages. So that I do not see how they can reconcile themselves to themselves.

Also they tell us (*Treatise of Oaths, p. 9, 10.*) of a time of primitive Integrity when truth flowed naturally, and needed no such expedient as an Oath, yea and nay was then enough. But when Men grew corrupt, they distrusted each other, and had recourse to Oaths as a remedy against falseness.

We would know what time this was when truth flowed so naturally from Men. Poets tell us of a golden Age wherein truth and justice and every precious thing among Men did abound. But we know it to be a meer Fiction of Poets, and no such thing ever was in the World since the fall of *Adam*. He indeed during his standing in innocency was repleat with truth and all graces and vertues: but his standing was but a while, there was at this time but one Man and one Woman. There was little use for Oaths during that short space: and yet I have made appear that during their state of innocency the wise Creator used at least an asseveration to them. There was more than yea and nay in innocency. Since the fall of Man, if we may use the Poet's words, *Terras Astræa reliquit*. The Iron Age begun with the fall. *Cain* murders *Abel*, and the whole World is divided into two great Ranks or Seeds; the Seed of the Woman, and the Seed of the Serpent. In a short time the World was grown so full of sin, that it repented the Lord that he had made Man, and it grieved him at the heart, and he was constrain'd to destroy the World by Water. And ever since all manner of wickedness hath been in the world, and prevailed more by far

far than honesty and godliness. Multitudes go in the broad way, but few in the strait Path of holiness. If you know any such Age of the World when the People and Inhabitants of the World were all so innocent, and wholly given to truth, that they needed no Oaths and swearing, nor any more than yea and nay, and truth flowed naturally from them, you must bring us some such Records as yet have not been known or heard of in the World. For Scripture tells us no such thing, but rather quite the contrary. What have you more to say against swearing and oath-taking? If I knew it, and it were worth the while and pains to examine it, or if I could think of any thing material to be objected against swearing, I should not stick to bring it forth, and render the truth yet brighter by answering all that can be alledged against it.

Some perhaps will begin to think that I am a loose Man who write in defence of Oaths, when the Land mourns because of Oaths; and there is more need to write against Perjury and false Oaths, and vain and prophane and useles swearing, with which too many in this present Age are laden. But as I am no Friend to any unlawful and false Oaths, so when I can apprehend my self duly called to it, I shall by Gods grace be ready to bear my Testimony against the Generation of wicked swearers, who profane the Name of God, and transgress the Rules of right allowable swearing.

There is but one thing more that I can think of needful to be added to this defence of Oaths, and that is in what cases it may be lawful to swear. But this is too large a Field to go over. Consult the Scriptures, and observe in what points and cases the People of God have used to swear; and in what cases the Lord of old prescribed to his People the use of an Oath for ending of strife-matters. The matter sworn must be lawful, you must understand what you swear, you must mean as you speak, and abhor all deceit, secret meanings, and mental reservations and under-hand constructions, and swear as if the heart-searching God stood before your Eyes, or as if you were to die with the Oath in your hand, and stood before Gods Judgment Seat. Swear nothing which you would not swear if any impartial and right understanding godly Person, one or more stood by, and should look you in the Face, and say, Friend take heed what you do. Remember that the great and principal Oath of all is the Oath of Allegiance to the King of Heaven. By Baptism you enter into the Lords Oath or Covenant,

venant, and become vowed and devoted to God; and if you keep not this sincerely you are no less than forsworn, and will surely perish. Baptism is not a Ceremony or Complement, but a binding sacred Vow: this Vow is renewed at the Lords Supper: all professing Christians are under this Vow, and engaged in Covenant to the Lord; and thence Baptism and the Lords Supper are called Sacraments, alluding to the *Sacramentum militare*. Christianity is so far from being against Oaths and swearing, that no Man can be counted a Christian externally, that is not externally devoted and sworn to God and Christ and the Holy Ghost by Christian Profession: and no Man can be a sincere Christian that is not sincerely vowed and Covenanted to God, against the World, the Flesh and the Devil. So that all Hypocrites, and unsound Christians, and meer worldly Professors are no better than perjured and forsworn: and this is the highest, and greatest, and most damning Perjury: all that profess Christianity and are not sincere, are false to their Profession. And their very Profession doth contain, virtually and in essence, an Oath or Covenant to be the Lords, and the seriouslest and most solemn and binding Covenant that can be in this World; Read *Deut.* 29. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, &c. All other Oaths, Vows, Engagements, and Covenants of what nature soever, publick, private, civil, ecclesiastical; assertory, promissory, among Christians are all subordinate to this great and principal Vow or Covenant, and are all virtually contained in it: this is the Life of all. This is all particular and lesser Vows, Oaths, and Covenants in one, as that which constitutes us Christians before God, and is the bottom and basis of all saving religion, truth, and uprightness towards God and Man; and which being right and sincere, giveth right to everlasting glory, and is our greatest mercy and blessing in this World, next to Heaven it self. If any one shall impugn the lawfulness of an Oath and swearing, let him know that he doth but blindly and ignorantly set himself to undermine Christianity and the saving Religion of Jesus Christ. For, what is an Oath but the greatest Testimony that Man can bear to any thing he affirms or denies, or promiseth to do or forbear? It is nothing else but the highest and strongest assurance that can be given of the truth in Cases of Testimony, depending upon the credit and veracity of him that swears. Now, are not all Men bound thus to assure, devote, and make over themselves unto God? What is a Christian but one that is devoted and consecrated to God solemnly

ly or virtually? All the essentials of an Oath are contained in the Christian Covenant. I grant this Covenant may be done more solemnly and expressly: but it is an Oath or Covenant when it containeth all essentials. As when I say, I profess my self a Christian and Servant of God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, against Satan, the World, and Sin; and renouncing all things inconsistent with true faith and holiness and the hope of eternal glory, I betake me to the only true God in Jesus Christ as my Portion according to his holy Will and Laws sincerely for ever. This is an Oath or Covenant to God, and so called frequently in Scripture, it being essentially the highest engagement that a Soul can make of it self to God, and is only wanting in some lesser matters to denominate it most solemn and explicate swearing or vowing to God.

I forgot to make special observation of one thing before, and that was, that in several Scriptures of the Old Testament there are Promises or Prophecies of Oaths to be under the Gospel, relating to the Ages after Christ, as that every Knee shall bow, and every Tongue shall swear and confess to Christ; all which are exactly fulfilled, it being made apparent that so many sincere Christians as there have been, and are and shall be, in the World, there are so many covenanted, devoted and sworn sincere Servants to God.

All therefore that name the Name of Christ, and do not depart from iniquity, must wear upon them the Brand of Perjury. Let Quakers be warned to repent them of all their abusive Doctrine against Oaths, and Fathering their errors upon God. Let them not think, that when they suffer for refusing lawful Oaths customably taken by godly Minds and pure informed Consciences, they suffer in righteousness, except they will call that righteousness which is caused by error and blind mistaken zeal. I do from my heart pity them, and desire no rigour may be done to them in the least; and that so far as it may consist with the interest of Christianity, the peace of the Church, and the publick weal of the Nation, all clemency and toleration be shewed them in the matter of Oaths; and, if it can be, that some expedient may be found out for their ease in this Point, to such especially as do erre ignorantly and well-meaningly. The Lord shew compassion to these poor blind Souls. Forbear, ye simple Souls, to kick against the Pricks. Draw nigh to God, and to his Word, and to his faithful Ministers; and God will draw nigh to you.

I had

I had thought to have added a Defence of our Form and Manner of swearing used in *England*, by laying the hand upon the Bible, and kissing it, and saying, *So help me God*. But upon further consideration I determined to let that pass. Whoever hath a mind may see it fully and accurately argued and defended, by Mr. *Baxter* in his *Christian Directory*, p. 416. Indeed I had thought to have craved leave of him to have transcribed it out of his Book, and annexed it to this Defence of Oaths and swearing, that it might be in more hands, and of more general use. But without his leave I would not do it. I have made this Tract longer than I would, though a great deal is left out that might have been added; because I would not burden the Reader, and lengthen Controversies.

F I N I S.
